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[FOURTH EDITION.]

MOUNT VERNON ASSOCIATION.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"It is indeed, entirely out of harmony with the sentiment connected with the spot to have it fenced about and managed as though it were a show."

Boston Evening Transcript.

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The Baltimore Sun of June 29th has an article of nearly a column in fine type, written by its able Washington correspondent, F. A. R. Our limited space in this circular forbids its entire republication. This want of space we sincerely regret, for we consider it one of the strongest arguments that has so far been published on the question at issue to confirm public opinion that the Mount Vernon Association is an unjustifiable, unpatriotic and oppressive institution, opposed to the teachings and principles of a Republican Government, and a proper respect due to the dead. The first sentence of the Sun's article in defence of the Mount Vernon Regency, reads :

"Editorials and communications on the subject of Mount Vernon and the "fee" exacted for visiting the tomb of Washington are just now of frequent occurrence in the columns of the newspaper press of the country. A movement has been initiated in this city (Washington) with the purpose of devising some method by which admission to the grounds of Mount Vernon and the tomb of Washington shall be made free, and circulars sent from this city have been the inspiring cause of the publications above alluded to."

So it seems that our little "circular sent from this city has been the inspiring cause of the publications above alluded to." This is truly gratifying to be informed that our little publication has been the cause of the great commotion extending from one end of the Union to the other ; it also proves that the press in every State is taking a deep interest in the matter, and has decided to let the people know how the tombs of Washington and Lincoln are used for the purpose of making money out of the general public. Our single handed effort —(setting the type, working the press, buying paper, envelopes, postage stamps, and other expenses, all drawn from our limited means) can well be compared to the combat between David and Goliath, and with truth, justice and respect for the illustrious dead for a weapon, we are confident that a headless giant will be the final result.

"Truth is mighty and will prevail."

"While error bruised and writhed with pain,
Will die amidst her worshippers."

Again says the Sun's correspondent :

"Among other statements is one giving the whole credit of acquiring the Mount Vernon estate to Edward Everett. Mr. Everett's services were most valuable and patriotic, but the sum total raised by his articles on Washington and the famous oration which he repeated so many times was $68,000. * * The remainder of the $220,000 principal and interest of the purchase money for Mount Vernon was collected by the ladies of the Associations, and mostly through individual subscriptions."

This extract sustain the statement published in the N. Y. Evening Telegram, Boston Journal, and Kansas City Times, that the people furnished the money to purchase Washington's tomb. There is no evidence to show that the said ladies personally gave a dollar to the fund required to purchase the estate. The money came directly from the people, and the first act of the Regents was to demand one dollar and fifty cents for the privilege of visiting the tomb and the estate purchased by popular subscription. A sum far in excess of the means of four-fifths of the said subscribers ; and furthermore, we are informed by the Sun's correspondent, "That the original act authorized the charge of twenty-five cents admission, and the association claims that this sum has never been exceeded." If this statement is correct who got the additional one dollar and twenty-five cents paid by visitors for several years for admisson to the premises?

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☞We invite special attention to this quotation from the Sun's article: "The original act authorized the charge of twenty-five cts. "admission, and the association claims that this sum has never been "exceeded." As an eye-witness to the contrary we most emphatically contradict this statement. We were one who went with a party of about twenty-five on the Steamer Mary Washington to test the admittance question. On landing and reaching the gate, which was closed and barred as we approached, each one of the party offered the superintendent, Col. Hollingsworth, 25 cents to be admitted which he refused. The first one who offered the 25 ct. fee was the old veteran, Thomas Davy, then 83 years of age. He turned with a sad heart that he had been refused admission to the tomb of the man he had reverenced from his boyhood. We can bring a cloud of witnesses to prove that the Regents demanded a price exceeding 25 cts. for admission to the grounds.

It is reasonable to suppose that an association generous enough to provide free admision, boat fare included, to 76 Senators, 333 Representatives, Cabinet officials, and the chief clerks, and "friends of the family,"—uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and cousins too numerous to mention—would also be generous enough to admit bonafide subscribers to the fund that purchased the estate for 25 cents when offered at the gate! The author of this circular liberally subscribed to that fund, yet his offer of 25 cents to be admitted to Washington's tomb was refused!

"It has been frequently repeated that the tomb of Washington is the only tomb in the world for the privilege of visiting which a fee is exacted. Even in the strict technical sense this is not correct, and no one who has traveled but knows what "a pretty-penny" it costs in one shape or another to pay devoirs at the tomb of saint, bard, orator or chieftain."

We do not see the point in the above paragraph to justify the extortion to gain admittance to Mt. Vernon. Because a "pretty-penny" is demanded to visit a tomb in foreign lands is it claimed that the Regents have a precedent which gives them the right to demand a "pretty-dollar" to visit Washington's grave? All travelers in foreign lands say that this "pretty-penny" system of begging is a great annoyance: and foreign visitors to Washington entertain the same disgust at the extortion of a dollar to visit the tomb of Washington. Here is an instance of foreign travelers rebuking our American system of paying "devoirs at the tomb of a great chieftain": Twelve citizens of London visited Washington in a body, July, '84, possessing means enough to travel over this entire continent, yet the twelve returned to London without visiting Mount Vernon, because the tax imposed was contrary to an Englishman's idea of a proper respect for the dead. In the language of the Psalmist, "Oh, Lord, how long" shall this American system of tomb speculation exist?

The author of this circular is responsible for the statement that Washington's tomb is the only tomb in the world that requires a fee to visit. We here confess our error. We learn from a letter recently published in the Cincinnati Enquirer that Abraham Lincoln's tomb has been added to the "museum" list, where the visitor, at the moderate charge of 25 cents, is shown a variety of "interesting relics," such as a piece of wood from the box where Lincoln was killed, and stained with his blood; also, a piece of an actress dress worn at the theatre at that time. Another "relic" is "the hole" where Robert Lincoln will be put when he dies, so described by the guide who collects the quarters from visitors. The sale of photographs to gain admission to Garfield's tomb is another "pretty-penny" scheme in the line of sepulchral speculation. It is safe to say that the three graves above named are the only ones in the world except a few in half-civilized countries where a penny is solicited from the beggars in charge. No other nation except this great and glorious Republic—this "land of the free and home of the brave" can *boast* of a deposit in a bank of

$37,000 exacted from pilgrims to a sacred shrine.

No other party but the Government should own Washington's estate. Arlington is so owned and all expenses to keep the property in repair are paid by the Government. Arlington is free to all, and not an instance is on record that this privilege has been abused. Can the managers of Mt. Vernon claim more, or as much respect for the dead as Arlington receives? The aristocracy, so much courted by the Regents, are more noted for their vandalism than reverence for the remains of Washington. A due respect for the Nation's illustrious dead demands that Mt. Vernon should be as free to the public as Arlington, the labored article published in the Baltimore Sun to the contrary notwithstanding. This Republic had better pay $10,000,000 for the property than subject citizens and foreign visitors to the present exorbitant tax. This great and rich Government cannot afford to let the civilized nations of the world criticise and ridicule the system which demands a fee, even to the amount of a penny, from visitors to the tombs of Washington and Lincoln.

"Mount Vernon is unlike all other spots where the bones of the venerated dead repose. It has not only the tomb, but the home of Washington. The graves of other great men—of those whose last resting place on the earth is the object of popular devotion and solicitude—have totally different surroundings and require no special income."

The above argument is so unlike common sense that we are surprised that the intelligent and judicious correspondent of the Sun should offer it as a reason for adopting the present tax system at Mt. V. He contends that the bones of Washington are so unlike the bones of other great men that no other agency but the present Regency possess the requisite qualifications to take charge of them. The bones of other great men can be safely placed in charge of a government and its appointed agents, but the bones of Washington are so unlike the bones of other venerated dead that it requires an association composed of venerated ladies for their safe and proper keeping.

The following frankly and clearly admits the dollar fee:

"From the time of the purchase all visitors coming by land have paid only 25 cts. Visitors by water pay $1, of which the boat owner receives 66 cents and the association 34 cents. Nine cents of this latter is applied to the repair of the wharf. The round trip by water is thirty miles."

In addition to the above figures, the Sun's correspondent could have added another interesting item. This same steamer Corcoran that takes 66 cents fare from passsengers who land at Mount Vernon, advertises to take passengers who do *not* land at Mt. V. to Glymont and back to Washington, nearly twice the distance for 25 cents. The boat after landing the Mt. V. visitors, at a cost of 66 cts fare, proceeds down the river to that popular and romantic landing Glymont, charging the low fare of 25 cents for the round trip. We commend this cheap and interesting excursion to all who object or cannot afford to pay $1 to land Mt. V. The 25 cents passengers from the deck of the steamer get a good outside view of Washington's home and save 75 cents by continuing down the Potomac ten miles farther. Another fast and commodious steamer Arrowsmith is now making daily trips to Colonial Beach, 70 miles down the Potomac and return, for 50 cts., yet to visit Mt. Vernon, the short distance of 15 miles, 66 cts. steamboat fare and 34 cts. admission fee is demanded form each visitor; and another fact, visitors are not only compelled to pay one dollar to gain admittance, but restricted to *one* particular boat, one particular *hour*, 10 a. m. At no other time, 10 a. m., can the public secure a passage down the river to Mt. V. at any price. That precise hour and the price is a costly monopoly, yet we are told by the Regent's gallant defender that "*The tomb of Washington is really the only tomb in the world which covers an illustrious hero and statesman that private greed and selfishness does not profit by*" *!!!* As the tombs in all nations, except in the United States, can be visited without money

and without price, we are at a loss to conceive how "private greed and selfishness" can derive any profit thereby. It is unjust and out of place for an American to insinuate that tombs in Europe are used as a means of speculation. Add all the fees collected from visitors to tombs in England, France, and Germany together during a century they would not amount to $79,000, the sum collected in *six months* from visitors to Mount Vernon in 1876! If $79,000 collected in six months is not sufficient to sustain a charge of "greed and selfishness" pray tell us what sum would be required?

Let it also be taken into consideration that no admittance is permitted on Sundays, and no boat except at 10 a. m., many thousands employed in the departments, in the stores, mechanics and laborers generally are entirely shut out from Mt. V. at any price for the want of a river conveyance on Sundays, or between 5 and 6 p. m. This rule that provides but one boat and 10 a. m. the only hour in the day to secure a passage is more deserving of censure than the dollar fee. It completely excludes a worthy class of citizens, and surpasses a greed and selfishness computed by dollars and cents.

Here's another sublime sentence:

"The method has been to make the atmosphere of Mount Vernon like a private home, with the halo of Washington forever around it."

True as holy writ. The method that excludes nineteen out of twenty from Washington's estate is very "like a private home," and a kind of a "halo" which thousands thus forbidden to cross its threshold do not enthusiastic'y appreciate. Less "halo" and more respect for public rights would be far more acceptable!

Here is what can be properly called a "tender" argument:

"To repeat, there is no other tomb in the world like that at Mount Vernon. No tomb can be more tenderly and more efficiently cared for."

A tender care for the *dead* is no more commendable than a tender care for the *living*. A truism that invites the special attention of the Regents.

The following is eloquent, if not so truthful:

"No man, no woman, no true American, who stands with reverent head by the tomb of Washington, will object to contributing 25 cents."

The writer again repeats that the admittance fee is only 25 cts. yet several times in his letter he admits that the actual cost is 66 cts boat fare, and 34 cts. gate fee. If he can convince the thousands who have visited Mt. V. and paid $1.50, and never less than $1, "that the admittance fee never exceeded 25 cts., he will accomplish a wonderful feat. No true American would object to contributing 25 cts. to protect Washington's tomb, but the people do object to the large sum of money collected annually. They do object that thousands are excluded from the tomb by the rule that permits but one boat, and one appointed hour to secure a passage. No, that 25 cts. is not the question at issue, and to which the true American people object to while "standing with reverent heads at the tomb of Washington"!

To remove the ladies comprising the Association from Mount Vernon is not our or desire. "With all thy faults we love thee still." Our object is to induce Congress to appropriate annually a liberal sum, and place the same in the hands of the Regents to be expended in the way their practical good sense may dictate, then open the gates free to all worthy visitors. Congress should also do another noble act, appropriate money sufficient to make Washington's Home a GRAND NATIONAL PARK; let every foot of the 200 acres be utilized for a park presenting a magnificent display of flowers, elegant marble statuary, fountains, an art gallery, etc., in this way make the estate the loveliest spot in the world, all placed under the supervision of American women eminent for intelligence and patriotism. In this way the remains of Washington would receive the honor and attention they deserve.

Respectfully submitted,

D. T[illegible]

Washington, July 4th, 1886.

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